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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7991
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1403
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4925
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8487
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6054
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3946
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1908
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000611

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: NLD TO BOYCOTT ELECTIONS, BUT QUIETLY

REF: 07 RANGOON 719

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) The NLD and a committee of 1990 MPs elect will not participate in the 2010 parliamentary elections, but are reluctant to publicize their positions or forcefully advocate for a boycott. Two key contacts told us that most opposition leaders have lost faith in the UN and Special Advisor Gambari, a sentiment articulated in a recent letter to the UNSYG from five MPs-elect. The Shan State Army North denied media reports that it has decided to participate in the 2010 elections.

2010 ELECTIONS

2. (C) In separate meetings with Poloff, leading 1990 MPs elect Aye Thar Aung and Pu Chin Sian Thang both said the National League for Democracy (NLD) and Committee Representing People's Parliament (CRPP) would not to participate in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2010. However, both men told us the NLD and CRPP's leaders were reluctant to publicize their positions or forcefully advocate for a boycott out of fear of arrest and harassment. Most members of the CRPP who attended a July 25 meeting, including six members of the NLD's Central Executive Committee (CEC), agreed that they should not legitimize the regime's roadmap by participating in the 2010 elections, according to CRPP Secretary Aye Thar Aung. However, he pointed out that the CRPP declined to reach a formal decision on a boycott and had no plans to issue any statements regarding participation in the 2010 elections on behalf of its membership.

3. (C) Zomi National Congress president Pu Chin Sian Thang noted that although the NLD issued a statement in June refusing to recognize the legitimacy of May constitutional referendum, it has remained silent on whether it will participate in 2010 and done little else to pressure the regime to engage in a genuine dialogue. Both Aye Thar Aung and Pu Chin Sian Thang believed the NLD's CEC (aka the Uncles) was afraid the party could lose its legal status or have more members arrested if it vigorously advocated a

boycott of the 2010 elections. But Pu Chin Sian Thang lamented that, as the largest and most broad-based opposition party in the country, the NLD should take more of an active, leading role in the struggle for genuine dialogue and reconciliation.

14. (C) For his part, Pu Chin Sian Thang pointed out that he and four other MPs elect sent a letter to UNSYG Ban Ki Moon on July 21 declaring their intention to boycott the 2010 elections and criticizing both the regime's roadmap and the UN's approach to Burma. Most of the 92 MPs elect who sent a similar letter to the UNSYG in July 2007 (reftel) expressed support for these positions, but were too afraid to sign this letter, he said. Pu Chin Sian Thang noted that he was detained for over a month last year and expected he would be again as a result of the letter. Even though he knew of no opposition plans to mark the 20th anniversary of the 8/8/88 crackdown, Pu Chin Sian Thang expected the regime would use the threat of protests to silence its more difficult opponents.

15. (C) Our contacts in the Shan State Army - North (SSAN) denied a July 29 BBC press report that the SSAN had decided to participate in the 2010 elections. On July 30, a spokesman for the SSAN told the Shan Herald that the cease-fire organization's bi-annual meeting was ongoing and that no decision regarding the elections had been made yet. An SSAN member based in Rangoon informed us that the organization's leadership had not issued any instructions to its members regarding the elections. The Shan State Army was founded in 1964 to fight for independence from the regime.

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In 1989 the SSAN broke away and concluded a cease-fire agreement with the regime.

LOSS OF FAITH IN UN

16. (C) Both Pu Chin Sian Thang and Aye Thar Aung commented that much of the opposition movement had lost faith in the UN and its Burma envoy, Ibrahim Gambari. Both men said they initially hoped that Gambari would use his good offices to push for genuine dialogue, but believed he has failed in this mission. They noted that Gambari continued to urge participation in the regime's "roadmap to democracy" as a venue that could lead to meaningful dialogue, despite all evidence to the contrary. Nothing in the 15 year history of the "roadmap" indicated the regime would tolerate dissent or include opposition and ethnic representatives in the process, they said. Instead of legitimizing this sham process, both Pu Chin Sian Thang and Aye Thar Aung asserted that the UN and Gambari should declare the roadmap dead, and pressure the regime to begin a genuine dialogue leading to reconciliation. A letter sent by five MPs elect, including Pu Chin Sian Thang, to UNSYG Ban on July 21 articulated these concerns. While he did not sign it, Aye Thar Aung said he agreed with its criticism of the UN and Gambari's approach. When asked what he thought about Gambari's performance, Pu Chin Sian Thang went further saying the envoy had "encouraged surrender over democracy."

COMMENT

17. (C) The mainstream opposition rightly views the regime's roadmap as a sham. But they lack the leadership, organizational skills, and resolve so desperately needed to bring about change. If the leaders of the opposition are afraid to sign a letter criticizing the regime's abuses and UN's approach, how can a body of diplomats in New York hasten change in Burma?

VILLAROSA